

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

### National Toxicology Program; National Toxicology Program Special Emphasis Panel; Notice of Establishment

Pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended (5 U.S.C. Appendix 2), the Director, National Toxicology Program (NTP), announces the establishment of the National Toxicology Program Special Emphasis Panel (NTPSEP) by the Secretary, DHHS.

The NTP Center for the Evaluation of Alternative Toxicological Methods (Center), on an as needed basis, will convene a group of expert scientists to accomplish the independent peer review of new test methods or evaluate existing test methods for toxicological assessments. Peer review panels will be asked to develop scientific consensus on the usefulness of test methods to generate information for specific human health and/or ecological risk assessment purposes. They will address the biological relevance of the new test to the toxicity of interest, and address how and when the new test method can partially or fully replace existing methods or approaches. When appropriate, panels will be asked to identify additional validation studies necessary to adequately evaluate a method, and to identify additional research necessary to support the development of mechanism-based test methods. It is anticipated that expert review panels will also be convened to evaluate the adequacy of current methods, and to evaluate proposed validation studies. Agencies will use this information to establish priorities for appropriate research, development, and validation efforts in collaboration with interested parties.

Duration of this Committee is continuing unless formally determined by the Secretary, DHHS, that termination would be in the best public interest.

Dated: January 21, 1999.

**Kenneth Olden,**

*Director, National Toxicology Program.*

[FR Doc. 99-2247 Filed 1-29-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4140-01-M

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

### Office of the Secretary

#### Notice of Interest Rate on Overdue Debts

Section 30.13 of the Department of Health and Human Services' claims collection regulations (45 CFR part 30) provides that the Secretary shall charge an annual rate of interest as fixed by the Secretary of the Treasury after taking into consideration private consumer rates of interest prevailing on the date that HHS becomes entitled to recovery. The rate generally cannot be lower than the Department of Treasury's current value of funds rate or the applicable rate determined from the "Schedule of Certified Interest Rates with Range of Maturities." This rate may be revised quarterly by the Secretary of the Treasury and shall be published quarterly by the Department of Health and Human Services in the **Federal Register**.

The Secretary of the Treasury has certified a rate of 13¾% for the quarter ended December 21, 1998. This interest rate will remain in effect until such time as the Secretary of the Treasury notifies HHS of any change.

Dated: January 26, 1999.

**George Strader,**

*Deputy Assistant Secretary, Finance.*

[FR Doc. 99-2311 Filed 1-29-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4150-04-M

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

### Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

[ATSDR-142]

#### Availability of Chemical Specific Consultation

**AGENCY:** Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

**ACTION:** Notice of availability.

**SUMMARY:** The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA), as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA), section 104(i)(4) [42 U.S.C. 9604(i)(4)] directs the Administrator of ATSDR to provide consultations upon request on health issues relating to exposure to hazardous or toxic substances, on the basis of available information, to the

Administrator of EPA, State officials, and local officials. This notice announces the availability of a chemical specific public health consultation titled "Hazardous Substance Exposures and Autism" that ATSDR has prepared for public comment. The consultation is a review of the available scientific literature pertaining to what is known about the association between exposure to hazardous substances and autism.

**DATES:** In order to be considered, comments on this draft consultation must be received on or before March 3, 1999. Comments received after the close of the public comment period will be considered at the discretion of ATSDR based upon what is deemed to be in the best interest of the general public.

**ADDRESSES:** Requests for copies of the draft public health consultation should be sent to the ATSDR Information Center, Division of Toxicology, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Mailstop E-57, 1600 Clifton Road, NE., Atlanta, Georgia 30333. Written comments regarding the draft public health consultation should be sent to the same address. ATSDR reserves the right to provide only one copy of the draft consultation, free of charge.

Written comments submitted in response to this notice should bear the docket control number ATSDR-142. Because all public comments regarding ATSDR public health consultations are available for public inspection [after the consultation is published in final], no confidential business information should be submitted in response to this notice.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** ATSDR Information Center, Division of Toxicology, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Mailstop E-57, 1600 Clifton Road, NE., Atlanta, Georgia 30333, telephone (404) 639-6357.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) (Pub. L. 99-499) amends the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA or Superfund) (42 U.S.C. 9601 *et seq.*) by establishing certain responsibilities for the ATSDR and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with regard to hazardous substances which are most commonly found at facilities on the CERCLA National Priorities List (NPL). Among these responsibilities is that the Administrator of ATSDR prepare consultations upon request on health issues relating to exposure to hazardous or toxic substances, on the basis of available